



April 26, 1999

Mr. Barrett Fountos
Office of International Health Programs
Department of Energy
EH-63/270CC
19901 Germantown Road
Germantown, Maryland 20874-1290

Dear Mr. Fountos:

Since 1990 the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has assisted the governments of the United States (U.S.) and the former Soviet Union - later the separate governments of Belarus and Ukraine -- with the development of long-term studies of health effects that might result from exposure to I-131 following the accident at the nuclear facility at Chornobyl. Our respective agencies have worked closely to develop research protocols, and all of us participating in these projects are pleased that they are underway.

The achievement of our governments' historic agreements to cooperate in medical research that will benefit the world could not have been accomplished without the tireless efforts of Dr. Bruce Wachholz. Dr. Wachholz's background in radiation biology, and his experience with multi-disciplinary studies related to radiation fallout, made him an obvious choice to establish these projects on the U.S. side. Although Dr. Wachholz will no longer hold a formal role in their management, his professional knowledge and familiarity with these studies will continue to be a valuable resource. Now that the studies are in progress, I have made some management changes to ensure success during this critical phase of volunteer participation.

First, the Chornobyl projects have been consolidated into the new Chornobyl Research Unit, which is headed by Dr. Gilbert Beebe. Dr. Beebe has been involved with the Chornobyl Program from its beginning and continues his active participation as an expert epidemiologist for both the thyroid and leukemia studies. Dr. Ihor Masnyk has served in many areas of scientific administration for these projects, and remains the overall Chornobyl Research Program Director and the Project Officer for the contract with Columbia University (Dr. Geoff Howe, Principal

Mr. Barrett Fountos

Page Two

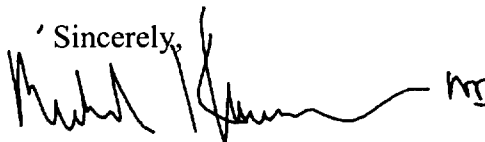
Investigator). Dr. Beebe can be reached by telephone at (301) 496- 5067, and Dr. Masnyk at (301) 594-7659. Dr. Andre Bouville, radiation dosimetrist, and Dr. Nick Luckyanov, physicist-mathematician, also have been transferred into this Unit. Ms. Kathleen Stine has replaced Mr. Jake Wechselberger as the project analyst.

Second, the Unit has been placed in the NCI's Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics (Dr. Joseph Fraumeni, DCEG Director), which is the primary focus within NCI for population-based research on environmental and genetic determinants of cancer, including radiation. The Unit will be under the general direction of Dr. Elaine Ron, Chief of the Radiation Epidemiology Branch.

Third, I have established the Chornobyl Oversight Panel (chaired by Dr. Shelia Zahm, DCEG Deputy Director), to maintain the internal integrity of these projects. This Panel is comprised of selected members of the NCI, and Dr. Jonathan Samet of Johns Hopkins University, who is a member of the NCI Board of Scientific Counselors. The Panel will review and monitor the scope, approach, scientific opportunities, communications, management procedures, budget, contract oversight and other important issues within the context of other NCI research projects. This oversight will ensure not only that the studies will be done well and in a timely manner, but also that the reported results will be disseminated widely to the public and to the scientific community. The binational Advisory Groups for the U.S.-Belarus and U.S.-Ukraine studies of thyroid disease will serve to provide advice about the scientific aspects of the studies to national and international authorities.

Finally, I have reinforced our commitment to the success of these projects by strengthening NCI's funding and personnel resources for the projects, and by acquiring a commitment for continued funding from the Department of Energy. This expansion will permit a more comprehensive collaboration between NCI staff and others, making the answers to our research questions a reality.

The NCI clearly has the expertise to carry out these studies, and the responsibility to ensure that they are done well rests both with the scientific staff who manage the day-to-day issues and with the NCI management. You have my commitment that these studies hold a high priority within this Institute.

' Sincerely,


Richard D. Klausner, M.D.
Director
National Cancer Institute